

Displacement and Rehabilitation of Tribals

Author(s): Biswaranjan Mohanty

Source: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 13 (Mar. 26 - Apr. 1, 2005), pp. 1318-1320

Published by: Economic and Political Weekly

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4416394>

Accessed: 30-05-2018 03:27 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Economic and Political Weekly is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Economic and Political Weekly*

Displacement and Rehabilitation of Tribals

In the case of India's development model, displacement caused by large projects has actually resulted in a transfer of resources from the weaker sections of society to more privileged ones. Mega dams, in particular, create victims of development – mainly tribals who never share the gains of development. It can be said that the bigger the development project, the greater the centralised control over it. This centralisation has a bias in favour of large landholders, rich farmers, engineers, bureaucrats and politicians.

BISWARANJAN MOHANTY

After independence when India launched the task of nation building, it chose the path of planned development. This was flagged off with the launching of Five-Year Plans. Since economic development was conspicuously poor, planners focused more on economic development defined mainly as the growth of GNP, which was symbolised by new factories, dams, mega projects, mining, etc [Kaviraj 1996:116]. Dams were even referred to as the 'temples of modern India' and as symbols of progress and prosperity. Though these mega projects have provided power to growing industries, irrigation to thirsty lands and above all, have brought economic prosperity to the nation, they have nevertheless, led to forced displacement of tens of thousands of people from their ancestral lands. The temples of modern India have become temples of doom for the uprooted people. Such projects have changed the patterns of the use of land, water and other natural resources that prevailed in the areas [Goyal:1996]. People dependent upon the land, forest and other natural resources for their livelihood have been dispossessed of their subsistence through land acquisition and displacement.

Scale of Displacement

Though millions of people have been displaced by various planned development schemes since independence, no reliable data exists on the extent of displacement and rehabilitation. Only a few official statistics are available. Some case studies indicate that official sources, by and large, tend to underestimate the number of

persons displaced by development projects. In the absence of firm projectwise data, the estimate of total number of people displaced by planned development intervention from 1951 to 1990 ranges from 110 lakh to 185 lakh [Fernandes and Thukral 1989:4]. However, according to another estimation, a total of 213 lakh people have been displaced by various development projects [Fernandes and Paranjpye 1997: 15]. These figures do not include the sizeable number of people who are acknowledged as being 'project affected' (i.e., by loss of livelihood caused by natural resources extraction or degradation), those displaced in urban areas and those victimised by the phases of secondary displacement.¹ If these are tallied, the number of displaced since independence would be as high as 4 crore [Kothari 1996]. The number of people permanently uprooted from their homes is equal to or larger than the population of many major sovereign countries.

Of the 213 lakh displaced people estimated by Walter Fernandes and V Paranjpye, 25.5 lakh people have been displaced by mines, 12.5 lakh by industries, 164 lakh by large and medium

dams, six lakh by park and wildlife operations and five lakh by other projects. The table below presents the details of displacement of people by various development schemes in India during 1951-90.

Among development projects, dams are the biggest agents of displacement. India has the distinction of having the largest number of river valley projects in the world. For rapid irrigation and hydroelectricity production, there are a total of 3,643 dams (major and medium) which have been constructed during the period of 1951-90. Together with 53.9 lakh displaced by medium dams, a total of 164 lakh people have been displaced by all dams during the period of 1951-90. Although there are no comprehensive figures of the relationship between the income and social status of projected affected areas, some micro studies point out that a considerable number of oustees have been small and marginal farmers, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other sections of the society [Patel:1986].

Thus, backward communities, and more particularly people in tribal regions have been most affected in this process of development since they live in resource-rich regions. Tribal areas produce most of the country's coal, mica, bauxite and other minerals. Due to rapid industrialisation in tribal areas, 3.13 lakh people have been displaced due to mining operations, and a total of 13.3 lakh tribals have been displaced from their ancestral lands. In addition to direct displacement, mining activity also affects the livelihoods of thousands more as water tables get disrupted, an excessive burden is dumped on fertile agricultural land and forests are cut [Mohapatra 1991]. Not only are communities deprived of their vital subsistence resources, their long-term sustainability is also jeopardised.

Despite large-scale displacement of people by various development projects

Table: Conservative Estimate of Persons and Tribals Displaced by Development Projects 1951-90
(In lakh)

Types of Project	All DPs	Percent- age of DPs	DPs Reset- tled (Lakhs)	Percent- age of Reset- tled DPs	Back- log (Lakhs)	Back- log (Per Cent)	Tribals Dis- placed (Lakhs)	Percent- age of All DPs	Tribals and Re- settled (Lakhs)	Percent- age of Tribal DPs	Back- log of Tribal DPs	Percent- age of Back- log
Dam	164.0	77.0	41.00	25.0	123.00	75.0	63.21	38.5	15.81	25.00	47.40	75.0
Mines	25.5	12.0	6.30	24.7	19.20	75.3	13.30	52.20	3.30	25.00	10.00	75.0
Industries	12.5	5.9	3.75	30.0	8.75	70.0	3.13	25.0	0.80	25.0	2.33	75.0
Wildlife	6.0	2.8	1.25	20.8	4.75	79.2	4.5	75.0	1.00	22.0	3.50	78.0
Others	5.0	2.3	1.50	30.0	3.50	70.0	1.25	25.0	0.25	20.2	1.00	80.0
Total	213.0	100	53.80	25.0	159.20	75.0	85.39	40.9	21.16	25.0	64.23	79.0

Note: DP denotes displaced persons.
Source: Fernandes, 1994, pp 22-32.

since independence, the country lacks a comprehensive resettlement and rehabilitation (R and R) policy. It was in 1993 that the ministry of rural development drafted a national rehabilitation policy. In the Indian federal structure, resettlement is a state issue, but only a few state governments have come out with a comprehensive R and R policy to resettle project affected people.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Thus, due to the lack of a detailed and comprehensive R and R policy, the process of resettlement and rehabilitation of uprooted people has been minimal and not very successful [Morse and Berger 1992:17]. For example, in the Bhakranagar project, a report prepared by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) points out that out of 36,000 households displaced by the project, only 12,000 were rehabilitated. The report further points out that in case of the Ukai project, only 3,500 out of 18,500 ousted families were resettled. In case of the Pong dam, the number of rehabilitated families were 9,000 out of 33,000 ousted households [CSE 1985]. On the basis of these three examples, it can be said that on average, only 26.5 per cent oustees have been rehabilitated.

The amount spent on the rehabilitation of oustees is also quite low. A study conducted by CSE states that as little as 1 per cent of the total cost of dam projects in India has gone towards rehabilitating DPs [CSE 1985]. In the Sardar Sarovar Project, the cost of temporary accommodation for staff overseeing the dam construction at Kavedia colony was more than the amount of compensation allotted for the rehabilitation of some 1,00,000 persons from the reservoir dam [Kothari and Bharati 1984].

Among the reasons for the dismal record of resettlement, the most fundamental is the disciplinary bias of project designers. Project authorities have not viewed resettlement as their responsibility and have tended to dump the job on local authorities. Resettlement plans sometimes have been developed on an ad hoc basis. They are not based on any detailed, planned studies which indicate the exact number of people to be resettled, but are sometimes based on guesswork.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that very few resettlement programmes in the country have adequately compensated all those who have been displaced. The question of how oustees will make a living after displacement has been a matter of the

lowest concern to planners. In fact, in most cases, the Land Acquisition Act is used to pay insultingly low cash compensation that is grossly inadequate to restore and enhance standards of living.

There is enough evidence of delay in the payment of compensation, which is much below the market rate at the time of displacement. In all cases, land was acquired at the market price at the time the project was cleared. Compensation was given, however, at the time of land acquisition, which may be after a decade. For instance, in case of the Bhakra dam, land was acquired at 1942-47 prices, but the allotment of new land to some of the oustees was made at 1952-57 prices, when the price had risen [Thukral 1988].

The amount of compensation given to oustees is arbitrarily determined and often involves recourse to lawyers and middlemen which only the rich oustees can afford, as documented in the case of Sri Sailam [Shiva et al 1991:214] and Ukai [Karve and Nimbkar 1969:72]. Viegas (1992) points to a glaring instance in case of the Hirakud dam of Orissa. The oustees also have to pay a considerable amount of money as bribes to government officials to fix what is considered as fair compensation and to expedite the inadequate payment they are entitled to [Thukral 1998:54].

There is also gender bias in the form of compensation. Substantial land is often worked, owned and even inherited by women in many cases, but compensation is provided to the head of the family or to men. A uniform, state regulated patriarchy is thus forced upon different cultures. Compensation to oustees is limited to individual landowners, who have land titles. In tribal households and joint families, households are often registered in the name of one individual, while they are framed on the basis of nuclear households. Such a policy provides the Indian state with the opportunity to minimise its expenses on compensation [Joshi 1987].

Cash compensation is paid in lump sums to oustees without any advice on proper investment or help in channelising it. Agriculturists who have learnt only to depend on existing natural resources for their livelihood are left without skills to subsist in the new environment. Studies conducted on Sriram Nagar oustees regarding utilisation of compensation point out that as little as 4 per cent of the oustees bought land, 20 per cent bought clothes, 26 per cent repaid their old debts and 50 per cent spent on domestic needs such as

marriage, cloth, food, etc. Those who spent the compensation money on purchase of land were big and middle farmers [Shiva 1991:214]. It needs to be pointed out that most oustees live in the interior where they have little interaction with market forces. Resettlement only in terms of cash leaves them at the mercy of market forces about which they know little. Another important problem of displacement is the issue of land acquisition. The Land Acquisition Act (amended in 1984) through which lands have been acquired for development projects, was passed by the colonial government to make it possible for the state to acquire private land for 'public purposes'. The act provides for payment of only cash compensation and only those who have a direct interest in the title to such land [Vaswani 1988].

Under the act, the legal obligations of project authorities do not go beyond 'monetary compensation' to a narrowly defined category of project affected persons. The underlying rationale is that displaced people should be able to rehabilitate themselves with the money given as compensation. In other words, the interpretation of resettlement stops at monetary compensation. This, according to the act, is calculated on the basis of prevailing market price of land and other properties.

Consequences of Displacement

The consequence of the present pattern of development is the continuing powerlessness of the weaker sections due to displacement and without any benefits from these development projects. Since independence, development projects of the five-year plans have displaced about five lakh persons each year primarily as a consequence of land acquisition. This figure does not include displacement by non-plan projects. Changes in land use, acquisition for urban growth and loss of livelihood have also caused environmental degradation and pollution. Hydroelectrical and irrigation projects are the largest cause of displacement and destruction of habitat. The other major sources are mines, industrial complexes as well as military installations, parks and sanctuaries, etc [Smitu Kothari 1996]. In the absence of firm project-wise data, estimates of the total number of displaced persons due to planned development intervention from 1951-90 ranges from the conservative estimate of 110 lakh to an overall figure of 185 lakh [Fernandes and Thukral 1989].

Several studies have documented the qualitative consequences of forced development. These consequences vary with local circumstances, but the ultimate common factor underlying the displacement effect is impoverishment. This occurs along the following crucial dimensions: landlessness, homelessness, joblessness, food insecurity, social disarticulation, loss of common property increased morbidity and mortality [Cernea 1990].

Tribal regions are more particularly affected in this process of development. A significant number of displaced tribals have historically been dependent on natural and common resources for their subsistence. Their displacement on a massive scale adds a serious dimension to the problem. These tribal communities have an ethos and a way of life based significantly upon their natural resource base. Due to developmental projects, they are forced to move out of areas where they have lived for generations. Apart from depriving them of their lands and livelihood, displacement, other traumatic psychological and socio-cultural consequences, tribals also have been victimised on the basis of their political rights. These include dismantling of the production system, scattering of kinship groups and family systems, disruption of trade and market links.

The situation is further compounded by inadequate rehabilitation measures. According to several case studies only 25 per cent of those displaced have been rehabilitated properly. In most development projects it is found that the attitude of project authorities towards affected people is apathetic and negligent. More particularly, the situation gets aggravated by (a) the absence of a strategy for re-addressing the problems resettlement creates and (b) by inadequate planning and execution.

Many sociologists and anthropologists have documented the above qualitative consequences of forced displacement. A survey which was carried out among tribal households in five villages at Talcher, Orissa [Pandey 1996] found an increase in unemployment from 9 per cent to 43.6 per cent, accompanied by a large shift from primary to tertiary occupation, and reported reduction in the level of earning upto 50 to 80 per cent among tribes and scheduled castes. In the Rengali irrigation project, Orissa, the percentage of landless families after relocation has doubled [Ota 1996], while in the coal mining displacement around Singrauli, the proportion of landless people skyrocketed from 20 per cent before displacement, to 72 per cent after [Reddy

1997]. Another study of seven projects causing displacement during 1950-94 in Orissa [Pandey et al 1997] found the problem of common property resources (CPR) in the post-displacement period. In the Rengali project, the access to common grazing lands and burial grounds, after dislocation came down from 23.7 per cent to 17.5 per cent.

Conclusion

It is clear from the above analysis that, the state has not taken this enormous problem seriously. In all the projects, the organisation and implementation of rehabilitation programme was the least thought out aspect. The continued existence of the above mentioned problems highlights the absence of an effective R and R policy, and thus calls for in-depth research which in turn would improve the formulation of development and resettlement policies.

The oustees who bear the pain never share the gains of development. Thus critics have argued that displacement caused by large development projects has actually resulted in a transfer of resources from the weaker sections of society to more privileged ones. This has generally been the case with India's development model. The large development projects, particularly mega dams, create victims of development – mainly tribals and other weaker sections of the society. It can be said that the bigger the development project, the greater the centralised control over it. This centralisation has a bias in favour of large landholders, rich farmers, engineers, bureaucrats and politicians.

Thus, development projects have done little to alleviate existing social inequalities. On the contrary, they have further aggravated the social structure in favour of the already socially, economically and politically powerful, thus throwing to the winds the socialist pretensions in the Constitution. ■■■

Email: mohantybr@rediffmail.com

Note

- 1 Secondary displacement refers to those whose livelihoods are adversely affected either as a direct and indirect consequence or as a short-term and long-term result of development but they are not acknowledged as 'project affected peoples' (PAPs).

References

- Bahuguna, S and Vandana Shiva, (1992): *Environment Crisis and Sustainable Development*, Nataraj Publication, Dehradun.
- Cernea, Michael M (1990): *From Unused Knowledge to Policy Creation: The Case of Population Resettlement*, World Bank Discussion Paper No 342. Harvard Institute for International Development. Harvard University, Boston.
- CSE (1985): 'The State of India's Environment: First Citizen's Report', Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi.
- Fernandes Walter (1994): 'An Activist Process Around the Draft National Rehabilitation Policy', *Social Action*, Vol 45, July-September, pp 277-98.
- Fernandes, Walter and Thukral E G (1989): *Development, Displacement and Resettlement*, ISI, New Delhi.
- Fernandes, Walter and Paranjpye, V (1997): *Rehabilitation Policy and Law in India A Right to Livelihood*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, p 15.
- Goyal, Sangeeta (1996): 'Economic Perspectives on Resettlement and Rehabilitation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 31, No 24, June 15.
- Joshi (1987): 'Rehabilitation of Submerging Villages', *General Report on Sardar Sarovar – Narmada Project*, Centre for Social Studies, Surat.
- Karve, I and Jai Nimbkar (1969): *A Survey of the People Displaced through the Koyna Dam*, Deccan College, Pune.
- Kothari, Rajni (1989): 'Grassroots', Seminar, 293.
- Kothari and Bharati (1984): 'Displaced!', *Illustrated Weekly of India*, February 24, pp 40-45.
- Kothari, Smitu (1996): 'Whose Nation: The Displaced as Victims of Development', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 15, pp 1467-85.
- Morse, Bradford and Berger, T (1992): 'Sardar Sarovar: Report of the Independent Review', Resource Futures International, Ottawa.
- Mohapatra, L K (1991): 'Development for Whom? Depriving the Dispossessed Tribals', *Social Action*, Vol 41, No 3, July-September, pp 271-87.
- Ota, A B (1996): 'Countering Impoverishment Risks: The Case of Rengali Dam Project' in A B Ota and Amita Agnihotri (eds), *Involuntary Displacement in Dam Projects*, Prachi Prakashan, New Delhi, pp 150-78.
- Pandey B (1996): 'Impoverishment Risks: A Case Study of Five Villages in Local Mining Areas of Talcher', *Orissa*, Paper presented at workshop on 'Involuntary Resettlement and Impoverishment Risks', New Delhi, March.
- Pandey, B et al (1997): *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation in Orissa 1950-1990*, Internal Development Research Centre, Canada and Institute for Socio-Economic Development, Bhubaneswar.
- Patel, M L (1986): *Changing Land Problems of Tribal India*, Progress Publishers, Bhopal.
- Reddy, U K P (1997): 'Involuntary Resettlement and Marginalisation of Project Affected Persons: A Comparative Analysis of Singrauli and Rihand Power Project' in H M Mathur (eds), *Impoverishment Risks in Resettlement*, Sage Publication, New Delhi.
- Shiva Vandana (1991): *Ecology and the Politics of Survival: Conflict over National Resources in India*, UNO and Sage Publication.
- Thukral E G (1998): 'Dams: For Whose Development?', *Social Action*, Vol 38, No 3, pp 211-30.
- Vaswani, Kalpana (1992): 'Rehabilitation Laws and Policies: A Critical Look' in Thukral E G (eds), *Big Dams: Displaced People*.
- Viegas, Phillip (1992): 'The Hirakud Dam Ouste: Thirty Years After' in Thukral E G (ed), *Big Dams. Displaced People: Rivers of Sorrow, Rivers of Change*, Sage Publication, New Delhi.



**Department of Policy Studies
PhD Entrance Exam**

SAMPLE QUESTION PAPER

This question paper is aimed to assess the candidates' knowledge of public policy and ability to critically evaluate policies from an inter-disciplinary perspective. The question paper is based on the research paper (Displacement and Rehabilitation of Tribals by Biswaranjan Mohanty) that has been uploaded on the website.

This is only a sample question paper. The actual question paper may have slight variations in the pattern.

Instructions:

- You may answer **any two** of the following questions
 - The time allotted for the exam is **2 hours**
 - The maximum word limit for each answer is **500 words**
 - Use of any unfair means will result in immediate disqualification
-
1. Justify with proper reasons why monetary compensation may or may not be an appropriate measure for displacement projects in India?
 2. How does the given article draw out the conflict between economic growth and development?
 3. With reference to the article, critically explain the impact of displacement on tribal livelihood.
 4. Justify with proper reasons how development-induced-displacement can lead to inequality in the society.
 5. Outline any demographic aspect which was not given adequate attention while discussing the impact of displacement on tribal population.
 6. Describe the research approach adopted by the author of the given article to deal with the issue of displacement and rehabilitation of tribals.